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Chemigation Program Overview



The chemigation program was enacted in 1989 to protect ground water and surface water from agricultural chemicals such as fertilizer and pesticides that are applied through a closed irrigation system. A closed irrigation system is defined as a pipe or conduit two inches or larger that is connected directly to any source of ground water or surface water used to irrigate agricultural or horticultural crops. Typically these closed systems are the center pivots you see in eastern Colorado or the San Luis Valley.

The Department of Agriculture issues permits to owners or operators of these systems annually at a cost of thirty-five dollars for each system. If a producer chooses not to apply agricultural chemicals through their irrigation system they can submit an affidavit of non chemigation at no cost.

The Department of Agriculture issues approximately 4000 permits annually statewide and inspects half of these systems every year. Inspectors with the Division of Plant Industry check permitted systems to insure all the proper back flow prevention devices are installed and functioning properly. These back flow prevention devices are designed to prevent the mixture of water and chemicals back into the water supply if a power failure occurs. The chemical injection system is shut down and the water chemical mixture that is in the pipeline is held there by a back flow valve.

Chemigation is a very cost effective method to apply chemicals and is environmentally friendly. Fertilizer can be applied in smaller amounts throughout the growing season and helps avoid the possibility of nitrogen leaching past the root zone of the crop and into the ground water.

The deadline to purchase a chemigation permit and avoid the penalty fee is March 31st. However permits can be purchased at any time prior to chemigating. For more information you can call 303-239-4149.